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ABSTRACT

In this study, twenty prospective teachers enrolled in an education methods course were studied to see what would happen to their self concept when they were thrust into the "real world of kids" with its associated teaching/learning problems. Two groups of ten students each were studied. One was used as a control and the other was used as an experimental group. Background research, specific methodology, and results of students on the Revised Janis-Field Feelings of Inadequacy Scale are described. The findings of the study showed that most preservice teachers had desirable self concepts when they entered the workshop sessions and enhanced them as a result of these experiences. (PMR)

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PRESERVICE TEACHERS' SELF-CONCEPT FROM THE CAMPUS THRU EARLY FIELD EXPERIENCES IN MULTICULTURAL SETTINGS

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RUNNING HEAD: Preservice Teacher Self-Concept

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ABSTRACT

The self-concept of two randomly assigned groups of prospective teachers was examined with respect to special workshop activities and the structured teaching of self-concept activities changing their self-concepts. The global concern was whether their self-concept was enhanced as a result of interacting with school-aged youngsters in difficult teaching-learning-living situations in multicultural community settings. Tests of significance revealed no differences in the total scores on a professionally recognized measure of self-concept with respect to both groups before and after the field experience. However, the experimental group exhibited a slight negative change in self-concept, while the control group exhibited an overall positive increase in self-concept. A greater positive shift in self-concept occurred between the beginning and end of the workshop sessions than before and after the field experiences.

There have been literally hundreds of studies over the last two decades dealing with the multifaceted aspects of self-concept. Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton (1976) reported that a rapid increase in the number of investigations on self-concept could be attributed to a renewed emphasis on the affective domain and its related outcomes in education. Paschal (1968) and Epps (1969) both found self-concept to be related to the academic achievement of ethnic minority students. Marston (1968) advocated that American education has a fundamental responsibility to enhance the self-concepts of low income disadvantaged students.

This investigation looked for possible solutions in reference to the self-concept of would-be teachers before and after intensive early experiences in community agencies: Does special workshop training or the structured teaching of self-concept development activities alter their self-concept? There have been contrasting views as to what happens to prospective teachers' self-concept (whether enhanced or not by special workshop training) when they are thrust into the "real world of kids" and associated teaching-learning problems. Garvey (1970) examined the relationship between self-concept and success in student teaching, and found that success is influenced by a positive view of one's self, lack of confusion in self-perception, and adjustment. Is preservice teacher self-concept enhanced as a result of interacting in many difficult teaching-learning situations? The objectives of this study were to ascertain the self-concept of two randomly selected groups of preservice teachers before and after the intensive field experience; whether special workshop activities altered their self-concept; and whether the structured teaching of self-concept activities modified their self-concept.

Background

Zirkel (1971) listed 15 definitions of self-concept explicitly cited in the literature and studies he reviewed. In the literature terms such as self-concept, self-esteem, self-acceptance, self-regard, self-confidence, self-perception, self-worth, self-report and self-image are used synonymously. For purposes of this study self-concept is an individual's general perception of himself-herself. These perceptions are formed through his/her experience with special workshop experiences and interactions in multicultural community-based settings. These perceptions are influenced by environmental reinforcements and significant others, and are inferred from a preservice teacher's response to situations, school-aged youngsters, or other people.

People with high self-concept are theoretically living up to their ideals. There exists little or no discrepancy between the respondent's ideal and actual responses. Block and Thomas (1955) concluded that adjustment to a given social situation and ideal self-concept may be curvilinearly related, making it difficult to select high and low self-concept people who also differ in adjustment. Wilcox and Fritz (1971) noted that people may differ in the tendency to see discrepancies between anything in its actual and ideal state in ways unrelated to self-concept. Katz and Zigler (1967) suggested that self-ideal discrepancies may increase as a function of age or cognitive complexity.

With respect to this study, the preservice teachers enrolled in an intensive and extensive, "Experiment in Multicultural Living" in the semester just prior to student teaching. In this 15 semester hour course the preservice teachers were on campus for a three-week seminar/workshop session which fulfilled partial certification credit requirements for methods in the "Teaching of Reading and Language Arts," "Teaching of

Elementary School Science," and "Teaching of Elementary School Social Studies." During the eight to twelve week community living component, the would-be teachers completed their academic requirements in the above methods courses by implementing knowledge, skills, and/or strategies acquired in the campus-based sessions while working with poor whites, blacks, Latinos and native Americans in rural or inner city community agencies, E.S.E.A. Title I elementary schools, migrant worker camp educational facilities, or reservation schools.

Methodology

Twenty preservice teachers enrolled in the previously mentioned program. They were randomly assigned to two treatment groups of ten subjects. The experimental group received special workshop preparation in the teaching of self-concept activities and were to teach structured self-concept activities to youngsters in their assigned community setting. As a vehicle for delivery of self-concept instruction, the experimental group used the substance found in *100 Ways to Enhance Self-Concept in the Classroom* (Canfield and Wells, 1976) and *Building Positive Self-Concepts* (Felker, 1974) as basis of the three-week session. The control group did not receive this special treatment but engaged in activities that are typically found in elementary school methods courses focusing on science, social studies and reading/language arts. Also, at the end of the workshop the control group was told that they were not to teach any structured self-concept activities.

The *Revised Janis-Field Feelings of Inadequacy Scale* (Eagly, 1967) was chosen to examine the self-concepts of the preservice teachers. This instrument contains 20 items, answered on five-point Likert scales,

which are balanced for response bias and acquiesence, and rely on rational judgment for validity. Crandall (1973) reported that this instrument is probably the most widely used non-commercial self-concept scale. Eagly (1967) recorded split-half reliabilities of 0.72 and 0.88 on two separate occasions. With respect to establishing validity for the instrument's interpretation, Hamilton (1971) has been the most prolific. Hamilton has made attempts to establish convergent validity, discriminant validity, and predictive validity.

The *Revised Janis-Field Feelings of Inadequcy Scale* (Eagly, 1967) was administered to both the experimental and control groups before and after the three-week campus session and after the eighth week of the community field experiences. Seven research questions were asked and seven classical t-tests were run to determine answers and test for significance ($p < .05$). The results have also been described by way of means and mean-difference scores along with qualitative commentary.

Findings

Prior to the three week campus-based workshops all 20 subjects responded to all items on the *Revised Janis-Field Feelings of Inadequacy Scale*. Their scores ranged from a low of 65 to a high of 95 with means of 78.0 for those anticipating the treatment effect and 77.4 for those those not going to receive any special treatment. The group about to receive specia' workshop training rated the specific dimension of "Anxiety When Speaking before Peers" as their greatest apprehension (M=2.9) whereas those in the control group revealed "Frequency of

Feeling Self-Conscious" as their weakest aspect of self-concept (M=3.0). Both the experimental and control groups viewed the specific dimension of "Perceived Self-Worth" as their most positive aspect of self-concept as reflected by means of 4.7 and 4.6 respectively. By way of t-tests no significant differences were found with respect to the total scores of both groups; however of the 20 items, the two groups differed significantly ($p < .05$) with respect to the two specific dimensions of "Frequency of Feeling Self-Conscious" and "Feeling Inferior to Most People." To further substantiate the findings and justify similarities between the two groups, a series of chi-square analyses were run to examine differences in the frequency distributions of both groups when considering total scores and item responses. No significant differences ($p < .05$) were found between the distributions of total scores, and only one specific dimension exhibited a significant ("Feeling Inferior to Most People") difference. Based on these findings, it is reasonably safe to assume that both groups were quite similar as a result of random sampling prior to any treatment or lack of treatment effect.

After the workshop the scores for those neophytes receiving the special treatment ranged from a low of 69 to a high of 91 with a mean of 85.5 whereas those subjects not receiving the treatment effect had a total scores range of 71 to 97 with a mean of 82.0. Both groups of preservice teachers indicated that "Perceived Self Worth" was their strongest self-concept asset as reflected in means of 4.9 for the experimental and 4.7 for the control group. The specific dimension of "Anxiety When Speaking before Peers" was found to be a concern of

prospective teachers in both groups again, as was the case before the workshop, as reflected by the lowest item means of 3.7 (experimental) and 3.0 (control). No significant differences were found between the total scores of both groups; however, significant differences ($p < .05$) were reflected by the specific attributues of "Anxiety When Speaking before Peers" and "Self-Confidence among Strangers."

When examining changes in perceptions among the would-be teachers who received special training in self-concept, a mean-difference increase (7.5) in the total scores before and after indicated an overall shift in a positive direction. The specific asset of "Anxiety When Speaking before Peers" showed the greatest shift in a positive direction and was found to be significantly ($p < .05$) different after the workshop sessions. The specific dimension of "Feeling Successful" also moved in a desirable direction and was found to be significantly ($p < .05$) different after the treatment effect. Of interest, three prospective teachers elevated their total scores 16, 15, and 13 points as a result of the special treatment. Significant differences ($p < .05$) were also present in reference to the total scores of the experimental group teachers before and after the workshop.

Positive changes were also noted among the attitudes of the would-be teachers not receiving the treatment effect as represented by an increased mean-difference score of 4.6 for total test scores before and after their conventional workshop not emphasizing structured activities for reinforcing positive self-concept. One preservice teacher's total score increased some 17 points over the three-week period. No significant differences

were found between the total scores or between the 20 specific dimensions before or after the no-treatment-effect workshop.

After the eight-week teaching experience in community settings, the future teachers who were to engage in structured activities to build and reinforce positive self-concept exhibited a slight negative change in their self-concepts as revealed by a -2.6 mean-difference between their total scores before and after the exposure. It appeared that a greater positive change in self-concept occurred before and after the workshop than before and after the teaching experience as reflected in the overall total score mean-difference indicies of 7.5 and -2.6 respectively. Of interest, one preservice teacher's self-concept appeared shattered as a result of the community based experience where there was a shift of 21 points in a negative direction. No significant difference were found between the total scores before and after the teaching experience and also before and after the total effort. In addition, no significant differences surfaced with respect to the 20 specific attributes either before or after the teaching treatment or before or after both designed treatment effects.

Once at the living-learning community sites, the would-be teachers who were told not to emphasize or engaged in self-concept building exhibited an overall positive increase in their self-concept as reflected in a mean-difference score of 3.0 between their total scores before and after their exposure. The specific dimension which revealed the greatest shift in a positive direction was "Anxiety When Speaking before Peers"; this aspect was also found to be significantly different at the .01 level before and was after the teaching experience. With respect to the lack

of two special treatment effects, the control group neophytes showed a consistent shift in a positive direction as represented in total score mean-difference index of 7.6 from beginning to end. No significant differences existed between the total scores before and after the teaching experience and the designed total effort. Also, the 20 specific dimensions yielded no significant differences before and after the lack of both designed treatment effects.

After the field experience the range of total scores for those emphasizing the structured teaching of self-concept activities was 68 to 96 with a mean of 82.9 whereas those who were instructed not to engage in such activities exhibited a range from 76 to 99 with a mean of 85.0. Although no significant differences were found between the total scores of both groups, the would-be teachers in the control group possessed a slightly more positive self-concept as reflected in a mean-difference score of 2.1. The experimental group neophytes viewed "Feeling Inferior to Most People" as their strongest specific aspect of self-concept (M = 4.8). No significant differences were uncovered among the 20 specific dimensions between responses of the experimental and control groups after the teaching experience.

Discussion

Before making any generalizations from these findings and commentaries, thought must be given to limitations inherent in this effort. Generalization is limited because of the small sample size of both groups and the typical errors of measurement. If larger random samples were

possible, this could have facilitated larger subgroups, and perhaps more valid findings. Also, any investigation using random sampling is naturally subject to sample error or group misrepresentation. The statistical and design problems generally associated with pre-interim-post test sensitization also pose limitations. In addition, there are probably many hidden interactions or uncontrolled extraneous variance that are influencing the relationships between preservice teachers' perceptions of self-concept, and how they actually responded to the items on the selected instrument. Crandall (1973) reported that while most people acknowledge having a sense of self, most research in the area of self-concept has been plagued with ambiguities. Caplin (1968) also noted that a lack of precision in self-concept is reflected in a lack of effective instrumentation.

The analyses revealed that special preparation which incorporated the structured teaching of self-concept activities did not yield results which could be interpreted as straight-forward, clear-cut or outstanding. Also, the complexities involved in the living-learning-teaching situation did not lend themselves to simple answers or explanations about changes or lack of changes in prospective teachers' self-concept from the campus through field experiences in multicultural settings. The need to enhance self concept has been identified and has enjoyed much discussion as being an important aspect in the preparation of future teachers. The findings of this study reflect that most neophytes possessed desirable self-concepts when they entered the campus workshop sessions and enhanced them as a result of these experiences. The specific aspect of "Perceived Self-Worth" was consistently high even after possibly

various negative encounters and "feeling" the interaction with youngsters in the "real world" of teacher-learner in a somewhat flexible environment such as a community-based setting.

Further analysis generated more questions than answers. Little is known about how comfortable a preservice teacher with a low self-concept feels about attempting to build positive self-concepts in others. A greater positive change in self-concept occurred between the beginning and end of the workshop sessions than before and after the field experiences. This was revealed by a positive shift of 7.5 for the experimental and 4.6 for control group's mean-differences for total scores before and after the workshop sessions, and a negative shift of -2.6 for the experimental group's mean-differences for total scores before and after the teaching experience. This finding leads to a host of unknowns associated with the types of preparation or training, if any, that teacher educators need to develop for preservice teacher passage from the campus to the field with respect to an enhanced self-concept. The data also revealed that the specific self-concept attribute of "Anxiety When Speaking before Peers" was enhanced in both groups as they progressed from the campus through the field exposure; whether this can be attributed to an overall enhanced self-concept, just plain maturation, acquisition of teaching experience or their interaction, cannot be explained by these data. The experimental group subjects revealed a slight negative shift after the teaching exposure; whether these results were caused by a willingness to admit perceived deficits, "on-site" problems so many, varied

and beyond their control, a drop in an individual's total score of 21 points, or their interaction, must remain unanswered. Perhaps, the nature and magnitude of many perceived problems associated with youngsters, other adults, or other environmental factors may have dealt a devastating blow to their self-concepts.

Other factors worth considering concerning the lack of definite differences among experimental and control group subjects are that both groups had spent two years in the same preparation program training to teach in multicultural settings. The request to the control group subjects to refrain from the teaching of self-concept activities, even if obeyed to its fullest, probably would not have altered their overall orientation when interacting with youngsters in teaching-learning situations. Although frequent supervising visits were made, faculty constant observation or monitoring were not pursued; therefore, this lack of control could not guarantee total abstention of control group subject from engaging in self-concept activities. Possible other reasons for a lack of significant difference between the two groups might be the weak influence of a short intensive exposure to self-concept to overshadow approximately twenty years of self-concept development and the confounding variables existing at the individual placement sites.

As a result of this exploratory endeavor, conclusions must be left unestablished at this point. The findings and comments might be placed in a more appropriate perspective if they are viewed as potential considerations for further investigations. and refinement. It is hoped that this effort has exposed the "tip of the iceberg" or "scratched the surface" for others to pursue in-depth.

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